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ABSTRACT

This questionnaire-style pamphlet was designed for child advocates, community activists, professionals, public officials, policymakers, parents, citizens, members of the media, political leaders, and those seeking public office in 1988. The focus is primarily on issues affecting American children and families and on facts having implications for the well-being of all Americans. For each topic considered, a brief factual presentation is given, followed by a series of questions designed to elicit readers' responses/solutions to the problems raised. Content includes material on (1) child and maternal health; (2) child care; (3) hungry, abused, neglected, and special needs children; (4) housing supply and homelessness; (5) education and training; (6) higher education; (7) successful preventive investment programs for children; (8) children and families in poverty; (9) prevention of teenage pregnancy and provision of positive life options for youths; (10) young families; (11) black families and children; (12) the role of government; (13) vision, character, and leadership; (14) national priorities; (15) world priorities; (16) a basic "social literacy" test for every candidate for public office; (17) information about the Children's Defense Fund; (18) and a pledge of responsibility for children. Additional aims of the pamphlet are to: (1) promote a national consensus on the importance of preventive investment in children and youths and a commitment from every candidate running for any office in 1988 to ensure that the basic needs of every child are met; and (2) provoke thoughtful discussion among Americans about national direction and the kind of leaders needed as the 21st century approaches. (RH)

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WHAT EVERY AMERICAN SHOULD BE ASKING POLITICAL LEADERS IN 1988

About Children and the Future

About Leadership and Vision

About National Values and Priorities



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CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

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FOREWORD

This questionnaire, designed for child advocates, community activists, professionals, public officials and policymakers, parents, citizens, members of the media, political leaders of all parties, and those seeking public office in 1988, has three purposes.

First, it seeks to focus attention on a range of issues affecting millions of American children and families and on a set of facts that have profound implications for the economic and social well-being of all Americans.

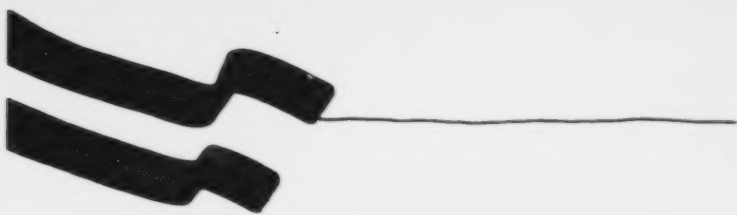
The first high school graduating class of the twenty-first century will enter first grade in September 1988. These preschoolers are the American workers, parents, taxpayers, soldiers, college students, and potential leaders of the twenty-first century. But today:

- One in four of them is poor;
- One in five is at risk of becoming a teen parent;
- One in six has no health insurance;
- One in seven is at risk of dropping out of school;
- One in two has a mother in the labor force, but only a minority have safe, affordable, quality child care.

Our society is aging, and the number of children and youths in relation to other age groups in the population is declining. If current trends continue, a disproportionate number of our young will grow up poor, undereducated, and untrained at the very time that our society will need all of our young to be healthy, educated, and productive.

It is not just 13 million poor children, or the millions more in moderate-income families who are still child care poor, housing poor, health insurance poor, and higher education poor, who must struggle to keep their foothold in the American Dream and who are unsure about their futures. A growing number of privileged youths suffer from spiritual poverty, afflicted by what John Levy of the Jung Institute labels "affluenza." The symptoms include boredom, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation—the product, he suggests, of "the family wealth that insulates children from challenge, risk, and consequence." In increasing numbers, the *New York Times* has reported, psychologists and psychiatrists are finding parallels between children of the urban rich and poor. "They both suffer from broken homes and absentee parents . . . Both move around easily accessible drugs, alcohol, and sex."

Second, we seek a national consensus on the importance of preventive investment in children and youths and commitment from every candidate running for any office in 1988 to ensure that every child has basic health, nutrition, shelter, and early childhood services and thus has the capacity and opportunity to learn well and to develop strong basic academic skills. The level of a young person's basic skills has a powerful



effect on his or her prospects for future achievement, teenage parenthood, and eventual self-sufficiency.

Third, we seek to provoke thinking and discussion among all Americans about the direction of our nation and the kind of leaders we need as we approach the twenty-first century. We share Texas businessman H. Ross Perot's view that the quality and actions of our leaders are our responsibility as citizens. "Don't blame our elected officials for failing to address . . . problems, and making soothing statements while the fire lights are flashing. They are simply reflecting our priorities, as determined by endless, but accurate, polls. Let's face it, we, not our elected officials, are the dwarfs and wimps."

Our message to the American public and to public officials in 1988 in this pamphlet and in a companion *Briefing Book on the Status of American Children* is stark and urgent: America must save its children if it is to save itself. For our children are not safe—physically, educationally, economically, and spiritually. Our streets are not safe. Our cities are not safe. Our national and world economies are not safe. Millions of our homes are not safe. Therefore America is not safe.

All Americans must join together now to make our nation a safe and decent place for children. A British minister, G. Campbell Morgan, in a 1908 sermon, "The Children's Playground in the City of God," articulated my deep belief that:

"God's purpose for the child and God's ideal for the child build the conditions of public life . . . Everything in the life of the coming city will depend upon the little child. Everything will be carried forward in the interests of the little child. Among other things, the streets will be fit for children to play in . . . When you have a city with streets fit for children you have a city with streets fit for adults. If the child is safe everyone is safe."

Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund

CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH CARE

More than 35 million Americans—a third of whom are children—lack any type of health insurance, public or private, and are one catastrophic illness away from financial disaster.

The United States has fallen to a tie for last place among 20 industrialized nations in preventing our babies from dying in the first year of life. A child born in some neighborhoods within the shadow of the White House and U.S. Capitol is more likely to die in the first year of life than a child born in Costa Rica or Trinidad and Tobago. Childhood immunization rates against preventable diseases like polio, measles, mumps, and pertussis are declining and the incidence of infectious disease is increasing, especially among very young children. Prenatal care utilization by poor mothers—which can reduce low-birthweight births, birth defects, and infant mortality—is eroding. Among industrialized nations, only the United States and South Africa fail to provide all children and families with basic health protections against illness and disease. The United States will not meet even the modest 1990 goals for maternal and child health set by the Surgeon General 10 years ago.

The number of working families without private health insurance has been growing rapidly, and most public health programs are overburdened and underfunded. Right now, the federal government provides at least \$25 billion in tax breaks to insure middle- and upper-income working families but offers virtually no subsidies for poor, uninsured, working families that need help most. Children are at particular risk. One in three uninsured Americans is a child and the majority of these children are from low-income families that cannot afford care without insurance.

- What specific policies would you propose to reduce the infant mortality rate in the United States?
- What specific policies do you propose to halt the decline in childhood immunization rates?
- Our national government no longer surveys childhood immunization status. Is it good policy to have no public agency watching our children's health?
- How do you propose to meet the Surgeon General's goals for the nation to increase prenatal care and reduce the number of low-birthweight births?
- What policies do you propose for the 35 million Americans, one-third of whom are children, who are uninsured and lack adequate access to health care?
- How can this nation afford not to invest immediately in comprehen-



sive prenatal care services, which cost an average of \$600 per mother served, when neonatal intensive care costs for the 250,000 low-birthweight births each year average \$20,720 per infant?

• What is your position on each of the following bills pending in Congress:

(1) S. 1760, introduced by Sen. Dave Durenberger (R-MN), to permit states to extend Medicaid coverage to poor and nonpoor children with chronic illnesses and adults whose families lack health insurance;

(2) S. 1139, introduced by Sen. John H. Chafee (R-RI), which would permit states to offer Medicaid for a modest fee to low-income uninsured families;

(3) H.R. 2627, which passed the House in 1987 and which would offer long-term Medicaid coverage in exchange for an income-adjusted premium to families that leave welfare and return to work;

(4) S. 1265, introduced by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and H.R. 2508, by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), to require all employers to furnish health insurance to full- and part-time employees and their families.



CHILD CARE

America's economy has changed drastically in the past 20 years. More than half of all married mothers with infants younger than two years old (2.8 million mothers) are in the labor force, a 108 percent increase since 1970. Fifty percent of all mothers with preschool children (9.5 million mothers) are in the labor force. By 1995 two-thirds of preschool children (15 million) and four out of five school-age children (35 million) will have mothers in the labor force.

Most mothers work out of economic necessity. The average annual income of a working single mother is \$10,076. Yet decent child care averages \$3,000 a year for one child. Millions of families find it impossible or difficult to find safe, accessible, affordable, quality child care. As a result, too many children like 18-month-old Jessica McClure, who fell down an open well shaft in an unregulated Texas family day care program that enrolled nine young children with a single caregiver, are at daily risk of injury and neglect. Too many children, in fact, die each year for lack of safe child care. In 1986 three-year-old Anthony and his four-year-old brother, Maurice, tumbled and burned to death while playing in a clothes dryer when their mother went to work and left them at home alone after her informal child care arrangements fell through. She was on a waiting list with 22,000 others for publically subsidized day care in Florida. That list has now grown to 30,000.

- What policies would you propose to meet the widespread and growing need for safe, affordable, and quality child care in this country for families of all incomes?

- Do you believe the federal government should take a leading role in helping low- and moderate-income families pay for child care?

- Do you support the enactment in 1988 of the Act for Better Child Care Services (S. 1885 and H.R. 3660) supported by a broad-based national Alliance for Better Child Care and now sponsored by more than 190 members of Congress? If not, why not?

- Do you believe that changes should be made in the federal child care tax credit? If so, what changes would be appropriate?

- What specific steps, if any, would you take—and when would you take them—to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care?

- Do you support parental leave?



HUNGRY, ABUSED, AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN AND OTHERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children have basic needs for food, shelter, and health care. Yet, according to Larry Brown, chairman of the Physician Task Force on Hunger in America, an estimated half million American children suffer from malnutrition in our boastfully affluent society. Too many also suffer from abuse and neglect. They need safe, permanent homes. And they need to grow up with strong mental and emotional health. But for millions of children in America today, these needs are not met. An estimated 2.2 million children were reported abused and neglected in 1986, an increase of more than 90 percent since 1981. Child maltreatment fatalities are also on the rise. Approximately 3 million children and adolescents have serious emotional problems. But more than two-thirds do not receive the care they need. In 1985 approximately 275,000 children and adolescents were living away from their families in foster and group homes or child care institutions under the auspices of state child welfare systems. About half of these youths were 13 and older. In some states the numbers of very young children are increasing. Between 1.2 million and 1.5 million children run away from home each year. More than one-third of these youths run from physical or sexual abuse at home, and 40 percent from other family problems. Although most return home, family problems go unresolved. In 1983, 80,000 youths were reported detained by the juvenile justice system on a single day. More than three-quarters of such youths have not been charged with violent acts. Many of them have multiple needs. Millions more physically and mentally disabled children need enhanced educational and social supports.

- What steps would you take to eliminate child hunger in America?
- What specific policies would you propose for expanded efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect, and for increased services for abused and neglected children and adolescents and their families?
- What steps can the federal government take to help support troubled families and prevent the unnecessary out-of-home placement of their children in child welfare, mental health, or juvenile justice facilities?
- What role should the federal government play in developing a comprehensive system of services and programs designed to meet the multiple social, physical, mental health, and emotional needs of troubled children and families?
- What steps do you favor to strengthen the quality and quantity of services available under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142)?

HOUSING SUPPLY AND HOMELESSNESS

Hundreds of thousands of American children are homeless. Members of families with children make up more than one-third of America's homeless population, three-quarters of the homeless in New York City, and half of the homeless in cities like Philadelphia, Trenton, and Yonkers. Homelessness has a particularly devastating impact on children. One study of homeless preschoolers found almost half of them developmentally delayed and half clinically depressed. There are not enough emergency shelters—much less permanent and affordable housing units—for these children and their families. Of the major cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, more than 60 percent reported turning away families from shelters for lack of space.

Today a group of families far larger than the numbers already homeless lives on the brink of homelessness because of joblessness, decreasing wages among working heads of families, increased poverty, decreasing housing supply, higher rents, and reduced federal help. More and more families with working parents are homeless. Yet federal funding for low-income housing has been cut by more than 70 percent since 1980. Even many young middle class singles and couples cannot find affordable housing and are moving back home with their parents. And housing discrimination against families with children of all incomes is pervasive.

- What do you consider the primary causes of homelessness?
- What steps would you take to prevent homelessness?
- Should the federal government help homeless families get out of emergency shelters and into permanent housing? How?
- Should the federal government help low- and moderate-income families rent or buy housing? How?
- Do you support proposals to make it illegal under the federal fair housing laws to discriminate against families with children in renting or selling an apartment or house?

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

America's prosperity, productivity, and competitiveness in the twenty-first century depend in large part on a well educated and trained work force. Young people between the ages of 16 and 24 will constitute only 18 percent of the working-age population by 1995. One in three workers will be a member of a minority group. As the proportion of young workers steadily declines, business and industry, the military, and all of us will have to rely on the productivity of a new generation of employees that, if trends continue, will be disproportionately poor, minority, undereducated, and untrained. One in seven of our young people is at risk of dropping out of school.

A recent study by more than 200 corporate and higher education leaders cited estimates that each year's class of dropouts costs the nation about \$228 billion in lost earnings and \$68 billion in lost taxes during their lifetime.

- The successful federal Chapter 1 program to enhance the skills of disadvantaged children serves a much smaller proportion of eligible children than it did seven years ago and reaches only half of those eligible. Do you support full funding for Chapter 1 by 1992?

- The successful Head Start program serves only 16 percent of the eligible children although evidence shows it helps keep children in school, at grade level, and out of costly special education programs. Do you support its expansion to reach 50 percent of eligible children by 1992?

- Youths who by age 18 have the weakest reading and mathematics skills, when compared to those with above-average basic skills, are eight times more likely to bear children out of wedlock, nine times more likely to drop out of school before graduation, five times more likely to be both out of work and out of school, and four times more likely to be on public assistance. What federal investments would you propose to raise the basic academic skills of America's children and youths?

- What steps do you propose to reduce the nation's secondary school dropout rate?

- Job training programs serve only a minute fraction of those in need. What federal and other efforts should be undertaken to give our youths the training and skills they need to enter and participate in today's changing job market? What should be asked of the private sector?

- Do you believe there should be a subminimum wage for teen workers?

- Do you believe the federal government has a responsibility to create opportunities for paid employment or community service for young Americans who are unable to find work?

HIGHER EDUCATION

More than ever before in our country's history, higher education is a prerequisite to adult self-sufficiency. A high school diploma is no longer a guarantee of adequate wages: from 1973 to 1986 the average earnings (adjusted for inflation) of young high school graduates dropped substantially. Despite the growing importance of postsecondary education, the college attendance rate of young black and Hispanic men and women has dropped. In October 1977 half of white, black, and Hispanic 16- to 24-year-old recent high school graduates were enrolled in college. In October 1986 the rate was 56 percent for whites, 37 percent for blacks, and 44 percent for Hispanics. Graduate and professional school enrollment and retention suffered a similar decline, especially among black males.

- What steps do you believe our nation can take to raise minorities' college enrollment rates so they once again equal or approach the levels of their white peers?
- Which federal higher education grant or loan programs need to be expanded or restructured to serve young people better?
- What steps can the federal government take to encourage institutions of higher education to help children and at-risk teens reach their potential and enhance the applicant pool for higher education?
- Would you encourage service opportunities for college students to work with children and others in need in our society? How?

SUCCESSFUL PREVENTIVE INVESTMENT PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Despite public skepticism about the efficiency of government, a number of federal programs for children have made an enormous positive difference in the lives of participants. Comprehensive prenatal care for mothers helps prevent low-birthweight births and costs an average of \$600 per mother, while neonatal intensive hospital care for premature babies averages more than \$1,000 a day. Every \$1 invested in quality comprehensive early childhood programs like Head Start has been shown to save \$4.75 in reduced expenditures for unemployment, welfare dependency, and crime. Every \$1 invested for pregnant women in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) saves more than \$3 in reduced costs for health care for infants. Public savings are even greater when the longer term costs of death and disability related to low birthweight are taken into account. Immunizations save \$10 for a single dollar investment. The Chapter 1 program of special educational assistance for disadvantaged children, which costs an average of \$600 per pupil, can help avert the substantially larger cost of \$4,000 incurred when a child must repeat a grade. The long-term cost is far more if a child drops out of school.

- In this era of budget deficits and in light of the proven cost-effectiveness of specific children's investments, how can we afford not to have these programs reach all eligible children?

- Do you support proposals for additional federal investment in 1988 to ensure that all eligible children can participate in:

- Head Start? (Only 16 percent of eligible children currently are served.)

- Another quality child care program like that proposed in the Act for Better Child Care Services?

- The WIC program of nutritional supplements for pregnant women, infants, and children? (Only 40 percent of eligible persons currently are served.)

- The Chapter 1 program of education for disadvantaged children? (Only 50 percent of eligible children are reached.)

- Childhood immunization? (Only 80 percent of two-year-olds are reached.)

- Medicaid coverage insuring prenatal and postnatal preventive care and treatment? (Only 50 percent of the poor are reached.)

- What other federal programs for children and families do you believe are especially effective and should be expanded?

- What federal programs for children and families do you believe are ineffective or wasteful and should be cut or eliminated?

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN POVERTY

Children make up the poorest age group in America. One in four of all preschoolers and one in five of all children are poor; among children born into single-parent households, one in two is poor; among the children of teenage single mothers, 84.4 percent are poor; and among children with two parents younger than 22, one in three is poor. More than 43 percent of all black children and 37.7 percent of all Hispanic children are poor.

American children, America's future, are 1.7 times more likely to be poor than adults older than 65, 2.1 times more likely to be poor than adults older than 55, and 2.5 times more likely to be poor than adults older than 45.

Most parents of poor children work, but a full-time minimum wage job brings a family of three up to only 71 percent of the federal poverty level. A growing number of working parents lack health insurance or other benefits critical to their families' well-being. In fact, a child in a working poor family is less likely to have health coverage than a child on welfare.

- What would you do to reduce child poverty in America or to alleviate the effects of that poverty? What priority would you give to this task?
- Do you support policies to increase the take-home pay of families with parents who work full-time but earn below-poverty wages? What are they, specifically?
- Do you believe the federal minimum wage should be increased to reflect changes in the cost of living since its last adjustment in 1981?
- What changes would you make in the unemployment insurance program, which reaches only a quarter of unemployed Americans? What changes would you make in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, which reaches only half of our poor families?
- Do you support the welfare reform provisions of H.R. 1720, recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives?
- What specific efforts, including child care and health supports, do you believe would assist families in making the transition from welfare to work?
- What would you do to strengthen our child support enforcement system, which, in 1985, secured full child support payments for only 24 percent of the 8.8 million women living alone with children younger than 21?

PREVENTING TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND PROVIDING POSITIVE LIFE OPTIONS FOR YOUTHS

Teenage pregnancy is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Each year about 1 million American girls get pregnant—the highest rate in the industrialized world, although our teenagers are not more sexually active than teens in other countries. About half of our pregnant teens have their babies, with an increasing percentage attempting to raise their babies rather than place them for adoption. About 40 percent have abortions. Teen pregnancy affects everyone's family and community and the majority of those who become pregnant and become parents each year are white. Teen pregnancy and parenthood are significant factors in the high rates of low-birthweight births, infant mortality, school dropout among females and males, and long-term welfare dependency, and add \$1.3 billion annually to taxpayer costs.

All our young people need greater parental and other responsible adult communication and much earlier prevention efforts before teens are forced to face the unacceptable choices between abortion, adoption, and parenthood at a time when they should be preparing for the future. Most importantly, disadvantaged young people need hope, positive life options, and the sense that there is a future worth protecting. Academic skills development and nonacademic means to build self-esteem, such as jobs, service and work experience, life planning supports and family life education, comprehensive health services, and collaborative, sustained community efforts to reach out to children and youths with caring support, are all essential to preventing premature teen sexual activity, pregnancy, abortion, and parenthood.

- What steps would you take to bolster the level of teen academic skills, which, along with poverty, is the single largest predictor of who will become a teen parent?

- What concrete steps do you support to provide constructive service, work, and recreation opportunities to keep young people off the streets and constructively engaged?

- What can the federal government do to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy?

- What suggestions would you have for schools? Families? The media? Employers? Religious institutions?

YOUNG FAMILIES

Much lip service has been paid in recent years to our passing on the federal deficit for future generations to confront. A greater disservice is passing on to them our economic problems in the form of lower wages while maintaining the status quo for ourselves. From 1973 to 1986 the median income rose for families in which the household head is older than 24. The median income dropped sharply for families in which the household head is younger than 25. Unfortunately for our country, the struggling 20- and 30-year-olds are the parents of America's young children. By giving the parents the wage problem, we have given the children the poverty problem, with all the nutritional, developmental, and long-term social problems that such a transfer causes.

Non-elderly Americans by the millions are losing health insurance because they lose their jobs, can find only part-time work or service industry jobs that do not pay benefits, or because the insurance offered through their jobs requires prohibitively high employee premiums for coverage. From 1979 to 1984, the number of uninsured Americans—those who have no private insurance or Medicaid or Medicare—rose from 26.2 million to 35 million. Young single-parent families and those in which both parents work also need child care. Of 6 million American employers, only about 3,000 provide any kind of child care assistance.

- What are the social and economic changes you see in America that are affecting the stability and viability of young families?
- What do you think the private sector should do to bolster young families?
- What do you think the federal government should do to bolster young families?



BLACK FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Contrary to popular perception, black women of all ages are having fewer babies. But, like white women, they are having more of them out of wedlock. Unlike white women, they lack enough "marriageable," (i.e., employed) men to form stable two-parent families. As a result, 60 percent of all black babies today are born to never-married single mothers and two out of three children in black female-headed households (67.1 percent) are poor. In households headed by mothers younger than 25, three out of four are poor. If the share of single births in the black community grows at the rate of the past decade, by the year 2000 only one black baby in five will be born to a married mother.

A significant cause of this black family problem lies in the eroding employment and wage base of young black men. Only 26.5 percent of all black male teens and 61.3 percent of those 20 to 24 years old were employed in 1986. Between 1973 and 1986, the average real (inflation-adjusted) annual earnings among black males ages 20 through 24 fell by nearly 50 percent (from \$9,818 to \$5,299 in 1985 dollars).

After a period of significant progress between 1959 and 1979, the status of black children is sliding backwards. Today a black baby is seven or eight times more likely to be an AIDS victim than a white baby, and minority teens (ages 15 to 19) are at highest risk for a range of sexually transmitted diseases. A black youth is five times more likely than a white youth to end up in an institution. Between 1979 and 1985, the number of black youths in juvenile detention facilities rose by 40 percent while the number of black youths entering college immediately after high school graduation fell by 4 percent.

- What is the role of the federal government in alleviating black poverty and its consequences?
- What steps would you take to create targeted economic and employment opportunities for unskilled black youths?
- What policies would you recommend to strengthen the black family?



THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The quality of ethics in government is often integrally bound up with the office-holder's view of whether government is ultimately a force for good or evil in the society. One reason we have seen such a high level of unethical behavior since 1980 is the dominance of people who think of government as a presumptively illegitimate enterprise, while viewing any private activity as presumptively valid. If the public purposes of one's job are not considered a high calling, the restraints against unethical behavior quickly erode.

In a democratic society, what government does well or does badly generally reflects what a society and its members do well or badly, whether in public or in private life. Was the Challenger tragedy the fault of the Morton Thiokol Company or of NASA? Are the cost overruns and malfunctions of major defense systems the fault of the Pentagon or of the major defense contractors? Although the public may identify these as failed government programs, they failed in major part either because of inadequate private performance or greed, and reflect broader social failures. Similarly, there are joint public-private efforts that have been extraordinarily successful. Medicaid's passage in 1965 gave millions of poor people access to the predominantly private health delivery system through public insurance payments. In the 15 years after Medicaid began, black infant mortality in this country dropped 49 percent, more than nine times the rate of improvement during the prior 15-year period.

- What steps will you take to foster high ethical standards in government?
- What role do you see for government in strengthening families and protecting children, especially those who are poor, disabled, or who face other barriers to full participation in American society?
- How would you seek to instill an ethic of excellence within and outside government?



VISION, CHARACTER, AND LEADERSHIP

The world is a complex and scary place in our nuclear age. It cries out for intelligent, courageous, calm, and positive leaders of wise judgment and solid integrity. The following questions are an attempt to get to know more about the kind of people who are seeking to guide the Free World toward the twenty-first century. Unless people in public life possess strong leadership capacity, an understanding of the importance of children and families to the national future, and a commitment to making the necessary choices to ensure their well-being, their responses to many of the specific questions in this pamphlet will not add up to much.

- If you could accomplish one goal during your term of office, what would it be? Why?
- If you could accomplish three things what would they be? Why?
- What are your greatest hopes for your children? Your grandchildren? What is your greatest fear for them?
- What single accomplishment are you proudest of in your life? Why?
- What do you view as your biggest mistake in life? What did you learn from it?
- What person or few persons do you admire most? Why?
- What two books have made the deepest impression on your thinking? Why?
- What do you believe in most deeply? How will that affect your priorities? What events and people helped shape those beliefs?
- What three values do you most want America to stand for in the world? At home?
- What three concrete achievements have you been responsible for since you assumed public office that would not have been possible without your leadership?
- How are you going to ensure that those people around you do not just tell you what you want to hear but also what you need to hear? How much do you seek and listen to counsel outside your immediate circle of staff and friends?
- Who are the two people outside your family and staff you trust most?
- Give one example of your leadership when you were in a small minority. For which principles have you been willing to risk losing?

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

The United States is first in the developed world in exporting arms but nineteenth in keeping our babies alive in the first year of life. We also lag behind comparable nations in low-birthweight rates for our babies. Among western industrialized countries, we and South Africa alone fail to assure all pregnant women access to prenatal care and delivery services through either a public health or health insurance system. Unlike similar nations, we do not offer child allowances, parental leave, and child care supports for working parents. We also lead nearly all other developed nations in rates of teenage pregnancy, abortion, and childbearing. American students ranked well below average in an international test of mathematical skills of eighth-grade students and even our best twelfth-grade mathematics students ranked next to last.

- Why do you think the United States invests comparatively less than other countries in its children?
 - What steps do you favor to change each of the areas above where our children are less well protected than those in other nations?
 - Since 1980 the federal per person outlay for military defense has increased 43 percent while federal programs for low-income families and children have decreased 6 percent. Since current budget priorities seem to leave too little room for investment in our children and families, what steps will you take, over what period of time, to produce the resources our children need to survive and thrive?
 - How do you rank the relative importance of the following in ensuring American security and competitiveness in the next century?
 - A strong military
 - Healthy, educated children
 - Stable families
 - Employment for every American who wants to work
 - Distinguished international lawyer and former Harvard law professor, Louis Sohn, has stated: "The future belongs not to those who have the largest number of weapons of mass destruction, but to those who can best solve their own economic and social problems and can provide a beacon of hope for the rest of humanity that all nations' problems can be similarly solved."
- Do you share his view? How would your policies and priorities on military and domestic spending reflect this view?

WORLD PRIORITIES

In "Agenda for the Twenty-First Century: Special Report," Rushworth Kidder of the *Christian Science Monitor* interviewed 16 leading thinkers about "the fundamental issues humanity must face up to" for the twenty-first century. The experts' answers ranged over a number of issues. At the end, "the first intensity items—the 'high leverage' issues" to which they believed humanity must devote its full attention and its unstinting resources were six:

- The threat of nuclear annihilation;
 - The danger of overpopulation;
 - The degradation of the global environment;
 - The gap between the developing and the industrial worlds;
 - The need for fundamental restructuring of educational systems;
 - The breakdown in public and private morality.
-
- What do you see as humanity's agenda for the twenty-first century?
 - What role do you see for the United States in the achievement of this agenda?
 - What changes will it require in the way we now conduct ourselves at home and abroad?
 - How would you rank the six items above, in order of importance?



A BASIC SOCIAL LITERACY TEST FOR EVERY CANDIDATE FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

When *Washington Post* columnist David Broder recently asked Vice President Bush on NBC's "Meet the Press" how many Americans lacked health insurance, how many who were unemployed had unemployment compensation, and how many children are poor, the vice president could not answer any of these questions accurately. Frankly, we doubt very many candidates, from any party, could have answered them accurately.

Every public official and every candidate for president and other public office should be able to pass a basic social and economic literacy test if they are going to represent all of the people well and take adequate steps to protect children. So should every citizen who is concerned with children.

- How many Americans are poor? (Answer: 32 million.) How many children are poor? (Answer: 13 million.) Who makes up the poorest age group in America? (Answer: children.)

- Are the majority of the poor white or black? (Answer: white.) Are the majority of the poor working or on welfare? (Answer: working.) What is the average welfare payment in America today? (Answer: \$4 per person per day.) Are welfare payments indexed for inflation? (Answer: no.)

- How many Americans are unemployed? (Answer: 7 million.) What percentage of them receive unemployment insurance? (Answer: 28.6 percent in November 1987.)

- What percentage of 20- to 24-year-old Americans are working below the equivalent of the 1979 minimum wage? (Answer: 37 percent.)

- Does a minimum wage job lift a family above the federal poverty line? (Answer: no. For a family of three, a minimum wage job equals 71 percent of the poverty line; for a family of four, 56 percent.)

- How many Americans lack health insurance? (Answer: 35 million.)

- What percentage of preschool children have mothers in the labor force? (Answer: half.)

- Where does America rank among 20 industrialized nations with comparable data reporting systems on infant mortality? (Answer: last.)

- How many American teens gave birth in 1985? (Answer: about 500,000.) Were the majority black or white? (Answer: white.)

- Which group of families is most likely to be poor? Young families (ages 18 to 24)? Those over 65? Those 40 to 50? (Answer: young families.)

- What is the average cost of buying a new house today? (Answer: \$84,300 in 1985.) Ten years ago? (Answer: \$39,300 in 1975.)

- What is the median income of all American families? (Answer: \$29,458 in 1986.) Of white families? (Answer: \$30,809.) Of black families? (Answer: \$17,604.) Of Hispanic families? (Answer: \$19,995.)

WHAT IS CDF?

The Children's Defense Fund exists to provide a strong and effective voice for the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor, minority, and handicapped children. Our goal is to educate the nation about the needs of children and encourage preventive investment in children before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF is a national public charity, privately funded by foundation and corporate grants, and religious, civic group, and individual donations. CDF focuses on programs and policies that affect large numbers of children and youths rather than just on helping families on a case-by-case basis. We provide information, technical assistance, and a variety of supports to a network of state and local child advocates in every state; pursue an annual legislative agenda in the U.S. Congress and in the five states where we have offices; and litigate selected cases of major importance.

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, we cannot influence the election of any candidate for public office. Our goal in this pamphlet is to encourage everyone in public life to support our preventive investment agenda for all children—the voteless 61 million citizens whose survival and quality are the single most important determinants of the quality of our national future.

A Prayer/Pledge of Responsibility for Children

We pray [accept responsibility] for children

who put chocolate fingers everywhere,
who like to be tickled,
who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,
who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray [accept responsibility] for those

who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never "counted potatoes,"
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children

who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who sleep with the dog and bury goldfish,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money,
who cover themselves with Band-aids and sing off key,
who squeeze toothpaste all over the sink,
who slurp their soup.

And we pray [accept responsibility] for those

who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children

who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church or temple and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray [accept responsibility] for those

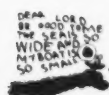
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.

We pray [accept responsibility] for children who want to be carried and
for those who must,

for those we never give up on and for those
who don't get a second chance.

For those we smother . . . and for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind
enough to offer it.

Ina J. Hughes



DEAR LORD
BE GOOD TO ME
THE SEAS DO
WIDE AND
MY BOAT DO
GO SMALL

Children's Defense Fund
122 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001